

Outreach

Spring 2004

In Celebration of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

by Governor James E. McGreevey

In May, New Jersey's Asian and Pacific-American communities will celebrate Asian Pacific American Heritage Month with a variety of festivals and activities. It is a time to celebrate diversity and the numerous contributions this important and growing segment of our society has made to the state's vitality and prosperity.

More than 480,000 Asians call New Jersey home. Ensuring that all Asian-Americans in our state, irrespective of their ethnicity and cultural background, share in the economic, community, educational, social and health opportunities the state offers is one of my responsibilities as governor. To assist me in this effort, I established the Asian-American Commission by Executive Order in October 2002.

The 45 individuals who serve on the Commission represent a cross-section of Asian-Americans with expertise and knowledge in business, the arts, law, academia, medicine, science and government. Some of the members appointed to the Commission also serve in my Administration, including Ratepayer Advocate Seema Singh, Assistant Counsel to the Governor Michael Angulo, Department of Finance and Insurance Assistant Director Ludi Hughes, and Executive Director of the Higher Education Student Authority Elizabeth Wong.

The Commission serves as my liaison to New Jersey's Asian population and as such, advises my administration and me on pertinent issues and events impacting these communities.

With the help of the Commission, the State has taken steps to forge stronger ties

within New Jersey's Asian and Pacific-American communities. One Commission initiative that I strongly support is the need to update school curricula to better reflect the influences and accomplishments of people of Asian descent on modern society. I have also directed the NJ Department of Education to consider extending foreign language credits to Asian students who attend



community-based foreign language classes taught by qualified instructors.

My administration is also supporting the Student Tuition Assistance Reward Scholarship, known as the NJ STARS Program. NJ STARS is designed to provide county college tuition and fee assistance for two years to those high achievers who graduate from a New Jersey

high school in the top 20 percent of their class. This program will help ensure that the best and the brightest of our high school graduates have the opportunity to not only succeed in college but also remain within our borders to become productive members of our work force.

The Commission is also taking an active role in assisting the State to identify new sources for increasing international trade with Asia and bring foreign investment into the State. Notably, among the top 20 nations which New Jersey exports to are six Asian countries, including Japan, mainland China, the Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan and India. In fact, 23 cents of every New Jersey export dollar went to Asian countries in 2003.

One reason why New Jersey's relationship with Asia is so deeply rooted in terms of economic investment is the large population of Asian-Americans who call New Jersey home, and the many rich and diverse cultures, religions, nations and traditions they represent. A population, to be sure, that is our fastest growing and accounted for \$21 billion in consumer market activity in New Jersey in 2003.

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Brown v. Board of Education, 50 Years Later

by Attorney General Peter C. Harvey



Attorney General
Peter C. Harvey

On May 17, the nation will mark the 50th anniversary of the most significant legal decision of the 20th century — Brown v. Board of Education. The landmark U.S. Supreme Court

decision that declared segregated schools to be unconstitutional set the stage for profound social and economic change in America and was a precursor to the growing struggle for racial equality that would be waged in the courts.

Legal scholars, civil rights advocates and historians will no doubt use the occasion of its 50th anniversary to debate and re-examine the effectiveness and wisdom of the Brown decision. In doing so, some will cite evidence that demonstrates that many of the nation's black and Latino students continue to score lower than whites in standardized tests and still attend segregated schools where educational resources are lacking and facilities are often woefully inadequate. As we approach its anniversary, there is no question that much work still needs to be done if we are to fulfill the promise of Brown.

However, here in New Jersey, thanks to Governor James E. McGreevey's leadership and the support of the New Jersey State Legislature, efforts to improve our schools and the quality of education all children receive are moving progressively forward.

That's due in large part to the State's investment of \$8.6 billion over the next ten years to build and renovate crumbling public schools, many of them serving inner-city and urban areas, as part of the Abbott decision. This investment by New Jersey into its educational infrastructure is one of the largest in the nation.

Along with building and repairing schools the Governor is also putting pressure on educators to boost scholastic achievement and implement educational initiatives that will support the State's substantial capital investment, including early-childhood development programs, intensive early literacy programs and professional development for teachers. Taken together, New Jersey is laying the foundation for educational equity, accountability and achievement very much consistent with the intent — albeit unfulfilled — and the spirit of Brown v. Board of Education.

Clearly, history shows that Brown was an inspirational factor in many civil rights demonstrations such as the Montgomery bus boycott and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s prayer pilgrimage for freedom at the Washington Memorial, to name a few. It also created the pressure that eventually led to passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Fifty years later, Brown, and the civil rights movement it encouraged, remains at the heart of civil rights advances in areas of voting, housing, public accommodations and employment.

For example, under my office, the Division of Elections and the Division of Law are working with county and local election officials on the implementation of statewide election reforms mandated by the passage of the "Help America Vote Act of 2002." Using federal funds available to New Jersey under the Act, we are in the process of removing antiquated lever ballot voting machines and replacing them with electronic voting machines. Soon the new machines will be in place statewide.

We are also developing an ambitious voter education program that will feature bilingual election materials, outreach to voters with hearing loss and visual impairments and materials on voter qualifications and registration. To ensure that polling sites are fully accessible, the

Division on Civil Rights and the Division of Elections are working together to ensure that sites are accessible to persons with mobility disabilities. We have put all election officials and counties on notice that they need to ensure access to persons with mobility disabilities, and that failure to make election sites reasonably accessible may result in lawsuits being filed to enforce the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination. People with physical disabilities or who are in wheelchairs should not have to suffer the indignity of either not voting or being carried up flights of stairs in order to vote.

I recently had the honor of swearing in new officers of the New Jersey Commission on Civil Rights, Felton Lingo, Sr., as Chairman, Olga Vazquez-Clough as Vice-Chair, and Sherine El-Abd, as Secretary. Before administering the oath, I thanked each member for their efforts to create dialogue on important civil rights issues that promote greater understanding and mutual respect among people of different races, backgrounds and religions. I urged them to continue to make their voices heard because as Brown vs. Board of Education has taught us, change often comes in incremental steps. On May 17, 1956, Martin Luther King Jr., said as much during a sermon at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, in New York City:

"Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability, but comes through continuous struggle. And so we must straighten our backs and work for our freedom . . . A man can't ride you unless your back is bent." ▼



From the Desk of the Director: Fair Housing Month Recognized in Fight Against Housing Discrimination



J. Frank Vespa-Papaleo, Director

The month of April brought recognition of National Fair Housing Month by the Division. As a result, the Division announced a variety of initiatives relating to combating unlawful housing

discrimination in New Jersey.

Toll-Free Housing Hotline

The Division recently announced a new, toll-free Civil Rights Housing Hotline (1-866-405-3050) for reporting housing discrimination. It has been nearly 15 years since the Division offered the public a toll-free number to report allegations of discrimination. Constituents can call the Housing Hotline to obtain information on housing discrimination, request copies of housing posters, or make an appointment to meet a housing investigator in order to file a formal discrimination complaint.

Public Service Announcement

To promote the hotline, Attorney General Peter C. Harvey recorded a public service announcement to air on radio stations across New Jersey. The Attorney General's public service announcement reflects our ongoing efforts to focus attention on housing discrimination and, wherever possible, enlist the public's help in identifying discriminatory conduct on the part of apartment owners, real estate agents and brokers.

Real Estate Memorandum

To assist the real estate industry in complying with state anti-discrimination laws, Attorney General Harvey and myself have, for the second year in a row, issued a written memorandum to New Jersey's real estate brokers and agents reminding them to treat all prospective buyers and tenants equally pursuant to the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination (LAD) and the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988.

The new April 2004 memorandum also notifies real estate agents and property owners that as of July 12, 2004, in accordance with the state's

Domestic Partnership Act, acts of discrimination in housing, employment and public accommodations based on a person's domestic partner status will be unlawful. This new law, which Governor James E. McGreevey signed in January, extends critically important civil rights protections to more New Jersey residents. The real estate memorandum is available on our Web site, www.NJCivilRights.org, in both English and Spanish and may be downloaded and circulated.

Enforcement Action on "Steering"

The April memorandum to the real estate industry comes shortly after the Division filed a housing discrimination complaint against an Essex County-based real estate agent accused of steering prospective apartment seekers to either predominantly black or predominantly white apartment buildings based on their race. The complaint alleges that real estate agents trying to rent out units in Verona and Montclair, asked prospective tenants their race over the phone and would then falsely tell black applicants that no apartments were available at an apartment building in Verona. When white applicants inquired about apartments, the agent would tell them that tenants at a building in Montclair are "all Black" and that amenities provided at the building in Verona are superior to the Montclair property. As a result, the Division filed a Director's Complaint alleging illegal housing discrimination insofar as the agent engaged in unlawful steering on the basis of race.

The Complaint seeks an end to all discriminatory policies and practices by Respondents and relief in the form of compensatory damages, reimbursement for costs and attorneys fees, as well as monitoring and training on the provisions of the LAD.

Multiple Dwelling Reporting Rule

New Jersey landlords and property owners with 25 or more housing units are required under state law to submit annual reports to the Division detailing the racial and ethnic composition of their applicants and tenants. The **Multiple-Dwelling Reporting Rule (MDRR)** reports help the Division discern potential patterns of housing discrimination and

determine if property owners are providing proper access to persons with disabilities. More than two-thirds of the eligible apartment complexes had completed MDRR reports as of April 1. In May, Orders to Show Cause will be filed against delinquent landlords who have not submitted reports.

Housing Training & Discrimination Prevention

On a final note, the Division is focusing extensive resources on educating the public, attorneys, real estate owners and agents, and advocacy groups on issues related to housing discrimination in New Jersey. It is critically important that all residents recognize that unlawful housing discrimination needs to be addressed in a proactive way. By working with advocacy groups, housing providers, and others in the real estate industry, I believe housing discrimination can be reduced in New Jersey. It has to be. We have no choice but to stop unlawful discrimination.

To that end, the Division has worked with the New Jersey Apartment Association (NJAA), Attorney Brian Kronick of the law firm of Genova, Burns, and Vernoia, and numerous attorneys and housing advocates, to explore legal issues surrounding housing discrimination. In March Mr. Kronick and the NJAA hosted a training session and Q&A in East Brunswick. In May, the Division will also participate in the NJAA convention in Atlantic City.

Many questions continue to arise especially in the area of how to handle potential discrimination against persons with Section 8 vouchers or other lawful sources of income. As cases continue to be pressed in the courts and before administrative agencies, we will start to see some clarity and guidelines in these areas of the law. So be sure to periodically check our Web site, www.NJCivilRights.org, which is updated regularly with useful information. Hopefully, by sharing information with constituents — whether individuals, management companies, real estate agents, housing providers, attorneys, and others — we can all work together to solve one of our most critical challenges, eliminating unlawful housing discrimination in New Jersey. ▼



Friends of the Division: A Q&A with Ratepayer Advocate Seema Singh

"Friends of the Division" is a regular column profiling agencies, organizations and individuals with whom the Division on Civil Rights works closely.

What is the role of the state's ratepayer advocate?

The Division of the Ratepayer Advocate represents the interests of all utility consumers whenever companies regulated by the Board of Public Utilities seek changes in services or rates for natural gas, electric, water, wastewater or telephone service. On every public policy matter in which the Ratepayer Advocate participates, the particular impact on residential consumers, people on fixed incomes, including the elderly is carefully examined. When the review is completed, the Ratepayer Advocate files its findings with the Board, which then makes the final decision. As a member of state utility policy-making groups, the Ratepayer Advocate also represents consumers in setting energy and telecommunications policy that will affect the provision of services in the future.

We also prepare educational materials that address many consumer issues such as deregulation and how to shop for alternative suppliers.

Our office held a statewide conference last November on energy conservation and aggregation. There, I launched a statewide initiative in which I will visit any municipality which invites me to help ratepayers with conservation strategies to reduce their utility bills.

Our office produced a Consumer Conservation Handbook which, along with our Manual for New Jersey Government Energy Aggregators, enables citizens and officials to deal with the rising prices of energy. The publications are available on our Web site at www.rpa.state.nj.us which also includes information for Spanish speaking consumers. If constituents prefer to receive hard copies of these handbooks, they may call our office at 973-648-2690 and we will be pleased to mail them.

How are consumers in New Jersey directly affected by the work of your office?

The Ratepayer Advocate works to ensure the rates paid for energy and



Ratepayer Advocate
Seema Singh

telecommunications services are the lowest possible ones that can be justified, that consumers have more choice from competitive service offerings and from the emerging telecommunication and energy supply businesses; that there is an advocate's office dedicated to protecting the interests of utility and telecommunications customers whenever long range utility and telecommunications policies are set.

Has your office encountered evidence of discrimination through the course of monitoring or reviewing utility rate increases for a particular category of consumers? If so, how did the Division respond?

Ensuring that utility and telecommunications are affordable cuts across conventional definitions of discrimination and affects all state residents, but it is particularly important to the poor, the elderly, and the physically challenged who have trouble making ends meet. Programs exist to help these customers, such as arrearage forgiveness, winter/summer shut-off moratoriums, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Lifeline (a similar program for telecommunications assistance) and even regulated water utilities are looking into similar plans. The Ratepayer Advocate is supporting the development of more such plans to ensure that no one in the state need shiver in the winter, sweat to the detriment of health in the summer, or cannot afford electricity-powered medical devices.

The Ratepayer Advocate is also involved in ensuring that libraries across the state receive donations from public utilities to finance Internet access. This is aimed at eliminating the so-called digital divide.

What is the most challenging aspect of your work?

In today's world, it is difficult to hold down utility and telecommunications rates. Keeping utility rates reasonable while improving the quality and reliability of utility service is a tremendous challenge for me and my small but committed and talented staff. We urge companies to invest in new or upgraded infrastructures to help them deal with rising costs needed for the production of their services (power, fuel, chemicals, salaries, equipment, etc.), as well as to explore innovative methods of supplying essential services.

In 2002, Governor McGreevey appointed you as the Public Advocate designate and named you to his Asian-American Commission. You are a member of the Governor's cabinet and the most senior level Asian Indian in state government. Can you describe some of your activities in these areas?

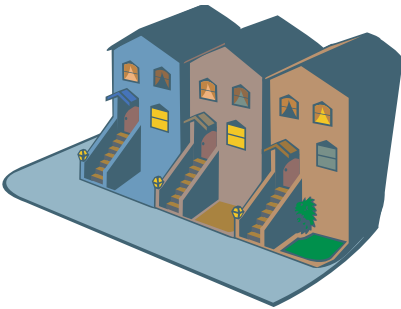
Following my appointment as Public Advocate designate, many people from across the state reached out to me with problems they were encountering. One issue which I helped to successfully resolve was the apparent discrimination in which the previous Department of Motor Vehicles was not recognizing the validity of international driver's licenses held by Indian foreign nationals. This resulted in the refusal by DMV officials to waive the road test requirement for Asian Indians, although the road test requirement was routinely waived for other immigrant and ethnic groups. After meeting with DMV officials, the matter has been successfully resolved.

I am also part of the statewide effort to increase voter registration and voter participation among Asian Americans in New Jersey. ▼

Civil Rights Housing Hotline

1-866-405-3050

We help open the door
to fair housing.



- *Have you been discriminated against when trying to rent or buy a home?*
- *Do you want to know more about what the Law Against Discrimination says about housing?*
- *Are you a property owner who wants to make sure that you are complying with housing discrimination laws?*

**Call 1-866-405-3050 toll free
and help stop housing discrimination**

We're here for everyone: whether you are a property owner, a tenant, in the market for a new home or want a new apartment, we can help you prevent unlawful discrimination.

Call us today to

- *get information about housing discrimination*
- *request copies of housing posters*
- *make an appointment to meet a housing investigator*
- *obtain the Attorney General Harvey's memorandum on housing discrimination*

If you want to file a complaint against someone for housing discrimination, call us to find out what you need to do.

Please note that we cannot take your complaint over the phone, but we can make sure that you have everything you need to do so when you get here!





Meet Commission on Civil Rights Member Kun Y. Lee



Kun Y. Lee

In 1999, he received the Ellis Island Medal of Honor – the highest award given to immigrants – for his efforts to help fellow Koreans in northern New

Jersey become naturalized citizens. A few years ago he helped start an international exchange program between private groups in the United States and North Korea that uses art, music, sports and business activities to create goodwill. More recently, he met with congressional leaders in Washington to focus attention on human rights atrocities in North Korea.

For Kun Y. Lee, a former high school marathon runner who left Seoul, Korea, 30 years ago for a better life in America, helping Korean-Americans living in New Jersey has been a life-long commitment with many personal rewards.

“I have been very fortunate. When I first arrived in the U.S., others helped me. I worked in many different jobs, as an auto mechanic, radio and TV technician and in refrigeration before starting my own business,” said Lee, who was appointed to the New Jersey Commission on Civil Rights in 1995. “Since I joined the Commission, I realized how important it is to work within my community on human rights issues and to help others.”

Last year, Lee helped organize the Division’s “Asian-American Civil Rights Summit,” which brought together more than 45 leaders representing Sikhs, Hindus, Arabs, Chinese, Filipinos, Koreans and other Asian and Pacific-American groups to discuss bias and discrimination within the Asian community.

“The meeting was important,” said Lee, “because it showed how different groups of people with shared experiences can become unified to address the larger problem of bias and discrimination.”

“Attorney General Peter Harvey, and Division on Civil Rights Director J. Frank Vespa-Papaleo, are very focused on educating diverse communities in New Jersey about laws that protect our civil rights. They believe outreach is a key part to helping people act against discrimination,” said Lee.

After the Summit meeting Lee said there was an exchange of ideas and information between Asians of different nationalities and cultures on ways to communicate within their communities and work together, despite language and cultural differences.

A recent U.S. Census Bureau report released in March projects that the population of Asian-Americans in the U.S. will triple by mid-century to about 33 million. As their numbers increase in New

Jersey and across the country Lee expects to see Asians become more visible and vocal in government and politics.

“I belong to several Korean-American associations, chambers of commerce and organizations that help Koreans,” said Lee, who estimates that more than 150,000 Korean-Americans reside in New Jersey. “That’s very important and I am very proud of that. But it’s also important to work with other organizations that support civil rights and to broaden our horizons into other areas.”

When he’s not managing his retail leather goods business in Paramus, Lee said he spends time with his family in Linden. In addition to his work with the Commission on Civil Rights, Lee stays active in human rights causes in Hudson County. More than anything else, however, he looks forward to the day when relations between the U.S. and North Korea bring peace to his homeland.

“Many Korean-Americans in the U.S. have families in North Korea. We are concerned about human rights violations and North Korea’s nuclear projects threatening the international community,” said Lee. “We have to take steps toward peace. It won’t happen like East Germany, when the wall came down. There are many gaps over many years in the relationship between North Korea and the U.S. It has to be a gradual thing. But I am hopeful.” ▼

State of New Jersey
Office of The Attorney General
Department of Law & Public Safety

Division on Civil Rights



Outreach

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Disability Law Conferences Help Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Last summer Denise Richardson went to a Voorhees hospital suffering from symptoms of pneumonia. According to her mother, hospital staff knew Denise was totally deaf when they admitted her, yet they waited two days before acting on family requests to provide her with an interpreter, closed-caption television and a telephone typewriter (TTY).

"She could not call her own children at home and keep in touch with family for two days," said Barbara Ricci, Denise's mother, who herself has hearing loss. "After two days we complained and they finally got her a TTY and closed-caption on her television."

Ricci said her daughter has been treated in hospital emergency rooms and doctor's offices for the last three years without benefit of an interpreter, despite her disability. In fact, she said it was not uncommon for Denise's 10-year old twins to serve as interpreters for the medical staff treating her.

"I didn't think it was right, but I was afraid if I made waves about it no one would treat her," said Ricci, who uses American Sign Language (ASL) to communicate with her daughter.

Ricci now knows that her daughter has a right to request an interpreter in a wide range of health care settings based on information she received at one of two law conferences held by the Division on Civil Rights. More than 200 people attended the March 2004 conferences entitled: "Protecting the Rights of People with Hearing Loss," which were designed to educate the public about the services the State provides to the deaf and people with hearing loss. The conferences were free of charge and took place at Camden County College and Montclair State University.

"I was on cloud nine after the conference. I told my daughter to ask her doctor to provide an interpreter for her next appointment. If that doesn't happen, we know where to go," said Ricci, who lives in Laurelton. "We will start making people aware. We're not asking for pity. This is our right to have an interpreter to



At the conference: Conference Coordinator Investigator Chris Tester, Attorney General Peter C. Harvey and Director Vespa-Papaleo

understand what we are saying when discussing critical medical information."

In Attorney General Peter C. Harvey, Ricci and others who have been denied an interpreter or other accommodations because of hearing loss have a strong ally. Addressing an audience of deaf and hard of hearing people attending the Division's March 22 law conference at Montclair State University, Harvey pledged the assistance of his office in bringing about change.

"We're going to contact the heads of hospital organizations and get their

assistance in making sure the resources and the technology you need to help in these situations are available," said Harvey. "This is something that we will start organizing right away."

The New Jersey Law Against Discrimination (LAD) protects individuals who have been discriminated against because of a disability. Additionally, under Title III of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), hospitals, doctor's offices and other health care providers are obligated to provide "auxiliary aids and services where necessary to ensure effective communication with individuals with disabilities." The ADA defines auxiliary aids and services to include qualified interpreters for deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

The Division's law conferences were structured to accommodate the deaf and hard of hearing and featured certified ASL interpreters, Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs) and Computer Aided Real-time Translation services, or CART. According to Conference Coordinator Chris Tester, the conferences represented a big step in reaching out to New Jersey's deaf and hard of hearing community.



Conference speakers: Deputy Attorney General Anne Marie Kelly; Director J. Frank Vespa-Papaleo; Conference Coordinator Chris Tester; Director of the Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Brian Shomo; EEOC District Director Marie Tomasso; EEOC Trainer Edward McCaffrey; and Coreen Grooms from the Division of Elections.

"For a long time the deaf and hard of hearing community has been isolated," said Tester, who is the Division's first deaf investigator. "I was very encouraged that we were able to reach out to people with hearing loss through these

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Division Names Co-chairs of New Employers Advisory Council

In April 2004, five professionals, including three attorneys, answered the call by Division Director J. Frank Vespa-Papaleo to serve as co-chairs of the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights' first-ever Employers Advisory Council (EAC).

Director Vespa-Papaleo said he created the Council in order to develop better communication with employers in the state, some of which have been the subject of discrimination complaints lodged by the agency.

"The overwhelming majority of the employment discrimination complaints we receive are resolved prior to a lawsuit being filed," said Director Vespa-Papaleo. "Yet, because of our statutory obligation to enforce state anti-discrimination laws, some employers may have a false perception that this agency only represents the interests of employees who allege discrimination. But the truth is, we are here as a resource to find ways to prevent and reduce discrimination in the workplace. Through the efforts of the EAC we hope to establish a consistent dialogue with employers, human resource



professionals, general counsels and others on issues of concern to them as well as keep them informed on Division policies, regulations and cases."

Named as co-chairs to the Council were Gene Mulroy, a partner with Holt, Mulroy & Germann; Jeffrey Kaszerman, a government relations specialist with the New Jersey Society of CPAs; Pamela Poff, Deputy General Counsel and Senior Vice President with UBS Financial Services; Christine Stearns, Vice-President of the New Jersey Business & Industry Association; and, Armando Riccio, Esq.,

who represents employers in legal matters for the firm Capehart Scatchard.

Each co-chair will reach out to employers in their region of the state and attend quarterly meetings with Director Vespa-Papaleo and Division staff. The first meeting is scheduled for May 26 in Mount Laurel. To join the EAC, register online at www.NJCivilRights.org or contact the Division's EAC liaison, Bear Atwood, at 609-292-5326. ▼

Asian Pacific American Heritage Month *continued from page 1*

Yet another reason why a tremendous amount of our export dollars go to Asia is our desire and need to compete in the global marketplace. This is essential for the long-term economic health of our state. Asia's sizable market presents enormous opportunities for New Jersey to increase trade, and invite investment. In partnership with New Jersey's Asian-American community, my Administration will seek out these opportunities.

Indeed, just this past April, NJ Commerce and Economic Growth Commission Secretary, William D. Watley, led a delegation of private sector business executives on a trade mission to Japan, South Korea and Thailand. The purpose of the trip was to bring New Jersey

businesses face-to-face with potential Asian business partners to solidify partnerships and agreements. From all indications, the trip was a great success with New Jersey businesses meeting with more than 100 foreign companies.

I am very proud of my Administration's efforts to foster greater communication with the State's Asian-American community, efforts that are resulting in enhanced business opportunities and stronger communities. Whether it's promoting cultural awareness and respect through our sister-city relations with Beijing, Tokyo and Seoul, providing important health information to communities in their native languages or convening legal workshops to educate

Asian-Americans on how to protect their rights against bias and unlawful discrimination, we will continue to raise awareness about government services and resources that may benefit Asian-American individuals and communities as a whole.

One of New Jersey's strengths is its diversity. So as we celebrate Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, let's redouble our efforts to understand and appreciate how diversity enriches all of our lives and helps create a more inclusive society where shared values, respect and individuality are qualities that improve and unite us. ▼

Disability Conference

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conferences and show them that Governor James E. McGreevey, Attorney General Peter C. Harvey and the Division on Civil Rights Director all are committed to upholding the law and safeguarding equal opportunity in employment, housing, and better access to places of public accommodation.”

Both conferences featured presentations by attorneys with the Division on Civil Rights and officials with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Following the presentations the audience was encouraged to ask questions and

make use of literature handed out by conference sponsors. Representatives from several state agencies also spoke and provided information on services for those with hearing loss. They included the Division of Elections, the Division of Disability Services, the NJ Human Relations Council, the Division of Highway Traffic Safety and the Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

In addition to covering the LAD and requirements under ADA, the disability law conference provided information on the technical resources available to help

the deaf and hard of hearing access government agencies, file complaints and obtain information.

Division Director J. Frank Vespa-Papaleo said the Division handles roughly 300 disability discrimination cases each year.

“Our aim is to make sure people with hearing loss or other recognized disabilities are aware of their rights and know how to proceed once their rights have been violated,” said Vespa-Papaleo. “More conferences are in the planning stages, including sessions to educate the blind and visually-impaired.” ▼

Black History Month 2004

The Division on Civil Rights, together with the Division of Elections, honored Black History Month with a tribute to African dance and gospel followed by a fascinating lecture on the role of New Jersey in the Underground Railroad.



Clockwise from top left: singer Passion Howard, dancer Jennifer Princess Sutphin and guest speaker Giles Wright, Director of the Afro-American History Program at the NJ Historical Commission.



above (standing) Special Assistant Amanda Koon, Assistant Director Gary LoCassio, Director of the Division of Elections Ramon de la Cruz, Passion Howard, Jennifer Princess Sutphin, Director Vespa-Papaleo, Assistant Attorney General Jeffrey Burstein, Assistant Director Philip Freeman, (seated) Giles Wright, Director of the Afro-American History Program, Commissioner Dr. Joan Rivitz and Deputy Attorney General Charles Cohen.



Want to Learn More?

Private Training is Available

The Division on Civil Rights offers Private Training on how to avoid and deal with discrimination.

Call the Bureau of Prevention and Community Relations at:

■ 609-292-2918

■ TTY: 609-292-1785

Register on the Web at:

www.NJCivilRights.org



Attorney General Harvey recently met with the Commission on Civil Rights and urged them to continue to make their voices heard on important civil rights issues. The Commissioners used the opportunity to apprise the Attorney General of issues brought to their attention by constituents on a daily basis. Pictured here from left to right are: Commissioner Kun Y. Lee, Vice-Chairwoman Olga Vasquez-Clough, Chairman Felton Lingo, Sr., Attorney General Peter C. Harvey, Commissioners Sherine El-Abd, Dr. Joan Rivitz and John C. Crowell and Director Vespa-Papaleo.



left In keeping with the Division's efforts to reach out to the Deaf and hard of hearing community, several employees dedicated their lunchtimes to learning American Sign Language (ASL). Pictured here are ASL interpreter Kathleen Ferijohn, Deputy Attorneys General Charles Cohen and Anne Marie Kelly, class instructor Chris Tester, Cassandra Jetter, Waleska Lucas and Agnes Roncaglio.

right Representing the Division at the Organization of Chinese Americans' Chinese New Year Dinner, Natasha Jones and Cassandra Jetter present two of the Organization's co-founders Keith Wang (left) and Julie Wang (second from the right) with community service awards.



Attorney General Forms Polling Site Accessibility Task Force

At the March 9, 2004, meeting of the New Jersey Commission on Civil Rights, State Attorney General Peter C. Harvey announced the creation of a special task force to ensure that polling sites throughout the state are fully accessible to persons with mobility disabilities.

The Polling Site Accessibility Task Force is comprised of investigators, attorneys and officials with the Division on Civil Rights and the Division of Elections who are working with county and local election officials to make sure New Jersey voting sites are fully accessible.

"I have asked Directors J. Frank Vespa-Papaleo (Civil Rights) and Ramon de la Cruz (Elections) to head up this initiative

which involves collaboration with election officials around the state on the need to prioritize polling site accessibility," said Harvey. "Our goal is to fix polling sites that are inaccessible, and identify alternative sites for locations where accessibility issues cannot be overcome. The people of New Jersey should be able to exercise their constitutional right to vote without worrying about whether they will have reasonable access to polls."

Division Director Vespa-Papaleo said polling sites that are not made accessible to persons with disabilities may violate the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination.

"Over the last several months, Director de la Cruz and myself have been meeting with election officials, legislators and advocacy organizations to emphasize that polling sites are places of public accommodation, and therefore must be fully accessible," said Vespa-Papaleo. "We know this may pose problems for some, but if polling sites remain inaccessible the State may have no choice but to seek remedies through the courts. We hope to avoid that, if possible, and encourage municipalities to spend its resources on making sites accessible rather than on legal fees defending against a lawsuit." ▼



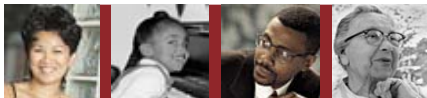
Governor James E. McGreevey declared March 26, 2004, to be "Italian Heritage Day" in New Jersey. Thanks to the Italian Teachers Association of New Jersey, the state's largest and most active organization of teachers of Italian language and culture, 400 students from school districts across the state met in Clark to celebrate the occasion. Pictured here is the Division's Communications Coordinator William Scheckel presenting the proclamation to the Association's president and co-founder, Maria Lena Papaleo.

Division on Civil Rights Mailing List

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We will keep you up to date on news and events concerning the Division's efforts to stamp out and prevent unlawful discrimination in New Jersey.





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